



Responsible Drinking program year in review

First impressions to epiphany

Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn
Public Affairs

Sometimes being hit between the eyes with a two-by-four block doesn't affect change, it only makes one madder than sin. That's the way I felt when I got an e-mail from my captain asking me to print, sign and fax back a responsible drinking agreement in February 2004.

Working amidst a four-month desert deployment didn't help my understanding either. I presumed this agreement, defining responsible drinking and exacting my compliance, was nothing more than a knee-jerk draconian measure designed to cut the number of some type of incident in half. I'd seen this type of measure before.

The days ensued and the issue never left my mind. I pondered its logic, stewed on it, brought it up to my senior leadership at the Combined Air Operations Center for further scrutiny -- even checked out its legality. Most of all I questioned how my admired wing commander, Col. Evan J. Hoapili, could have gone off the deep end and ordered this one-size-fits-all measure.

Be darned my career if need be, I signed up for integrity first. I couldn't sign a letter stating "I fully understand what responsible drinking means. I will engage in responsible drinking." By signing this moral contract, I felt violating the 0-0-1-3 definition of responsible drinking would not only let myself down, but would let down the people whose words with them are my binding contract. But there was a loophole -- it was voluntary.

I didn't sign the letter.

After I returned from the desert in April, I had the opportunity to listen to Col Hoapili brief his new commanders on the "Responsible Drinking Program" in the course of my professional responsibilities -- it was two full hours.

I had a significant emotional event.

The responsible drinking program, branded "0-0-1-3," made sense. It altered the way I think about consuming alcohol. Actually, I can't get it out of my head, even if I wanted to forget.

Listening to Colonel Hoapili's points delivered with passion and zeal drove home the importance of melding a three-point program from unbiased national and local research. I realized he was the same sage commander who was creating a cutting edge program using methods not used before in the Air Force.

Our wing leadership combined to formulate this plan to fix a broad-based problem founded in society, rather than mask the symptoms. By establishing a measurable norm to keep blood alcohol levels below 0.05 percent, the plan was set to defeat the alcohol-related incident statistics. The foundation was set to be more than a mandatory brief with a catchy phrase.

Since my epiphany, I have learned much more about the program and worked toward promoting the concept to others. This program can't work if it is merely forced. Leadership has to sell it; people have to buy into it, take ownership of it, and use it like a tool. It isn't a prescription that will make the ails go away over night, it's a culture change and change takes time.

From the alternative activities and the media blitzkrieg to the personal one-on-one attention and risk evaluation process, it is a full-service program. The numbers of incident reductions from last year are breathtaking, and if we continue the pace there is no good reason the installation can't shave off some more. It's about constant awareness, enforcement, viable alternatives, intervention, and a group of people who won't let it off of their radarscope.

It's not about a piece of paper one must sign.

I still won't sign the agreement, but I can't pick up a beer or order a cocktail without evaluating my moral obligation -- consciously or otherwise. The numbers crunch in my head like a calculator, and in effect have achieved its goal of starting a culture change from within me.

It works for me, whether I signed a piece of paper or not, and isn't that what the end result is supposed to achieve?

0-0-1-3: one year later

Airman 1st Class Lauren Sixbey
Public Affairs

It began one year ago as a reaction to a national health crisis. Binge drinking, underage drinking and driving under the influence had become all too common.

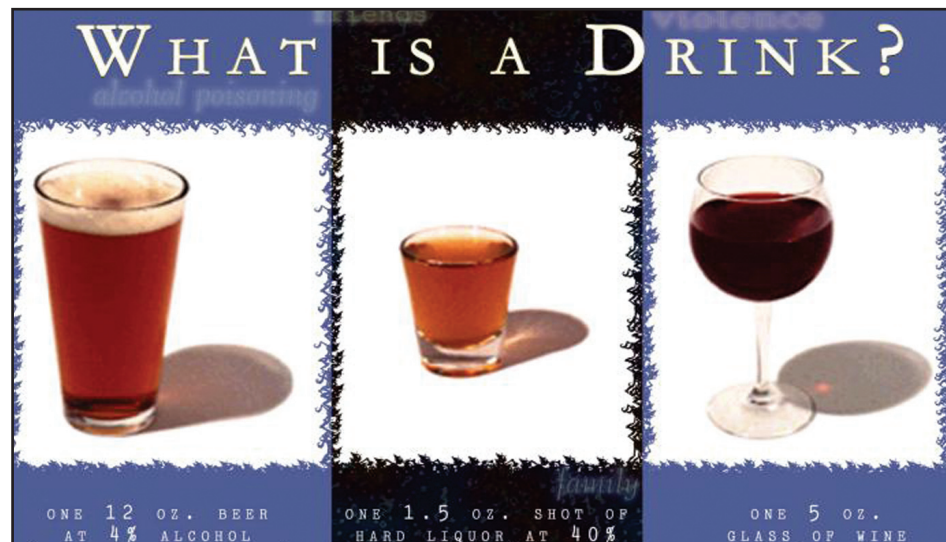
"It has affected every community, every campus, pretty much every place that touches lives across the nation," said Col. Evan Hoapili, 90th Space Wing commander. "As a military, we represent the society we serve."

For that reason, Warren leadership, with the help of Wyoming first lady Nancy Freudenthal and a non-profit organization called Facing Alcohol Concerns Through Education, created a program in March 2004 named 0-0-1-3 designed to increase awareness of responsible drinking.

"Every single quarter since we've implemented this program we've seen an increase in reduction of alcohol related incidents," said the commander.

The average age for alcohol related offenders has risen from 19 in 2003 to 22 in 2004. Also, the average blood alcohol content has declined in each of the offenders.

The program is based on science and physiology. The first 0 stands for



zero drinks for those under 21. The second 0 stands for zero DUIs. The 1 stands for one drink per hour to give the liver enough time to process the alcohol. The 3 stands for a maximum of three drinks per night to keep the body's blood alcohol content below .05 percent.

The purposes of the program are threefold, according to Colonel Hoapili. First, it reminds people that it isn't prohibition. Second, it keeps most people under the legal threshold of a blood alcohol content of .05 percent. Third, it allows people to keep their behavior at a personally responsible level.

To get the message of 0-0-1-3 out to the base populous, various marketing tools have been developed. More than 600 posters made by the visual information department have been distributed throughout Warren's 12,600-square-mile missile field complex. Four phases have debuted since the program's inception. Themes have included "Bad Call," "Beer Man," "There's More to Life," and "It's About Drinking Responsibly." The themes have taken different approaches to the program from showing the consequences of a DUI, to poking fun at the common criticisms and misperceptions, to showing more productive activities.

Those productive activities provide Airmen something of value in exchange for drinking, including late night basketball, late night dances, late night pool parties and a paint ball course. Young Airmen run Dorm Escape. Located in the First Term Airmen's Center, Dorm Escape is open five nights a week and provides video games, movies on big screen TVs, pool, foosball and more.

Warren Airmen have embraced the program.

"[If you] stick to the rules you will stay out of trouble," said Airman 1st Class Dwane Samuel, 90th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

"People like to poke fun at the 0-0-1-3 program, but you can't go into a bar and not think about it," said Airman 1st Class Tessa Cubbon, 90th Space Wing. "Airmen are changing the way they have fun."

The program has received nationwide attention. USA Today and CNN have both visited Warren to do stories on 0-0-1-3, while Colonel Hoapili and the program have been featured on multiple local radio stations and the Wyoming Tribune Eagle, the Billings Gazette, the Associated Press.

"It's worthwhile because it takes care of our most precious resource -- our people," said Colonel Hoapili. "This program keeps our people safe."

Physiology behind the program

Master Sgt. Jeff Bohn
Public Affairs

When it comes to responsible alcohol use, we are seemingly torn between a conflict of the physical versus the mental aspects of drinking, which are often shrouded in controversy in the world of media. An advertiser's marketing scheme exhibiting a couple of half-dressed women dancing with their favorite beer provides conflict with a remorseful rendition of a drunk driving accident, which leaves a family without a mother. It's no wonder some folks tote abstinence while others tote a case of the high life -- but is either view correct?

The responsible drinking plan's branding of the theme 0-0-1-3 is about defining a norm, and a scientific means of defining an acceptable standard for alcohol consumption. The numbers weren't dreamed up. The 0-0-1-3 is based on facts and solid assumptions. The goal of drinking responsibly is to create a culture change and a sober environment where people don't intoxicate to the point they make poor decisions.

The first two numbers are law. Zero underage drinking and zero driving under the influence defines laws that have been in effect for a number of years.

The "1" and the "3" of the campaign are defined by one drink per hour and three drinks maximum per evening. They are created from human physiology and an attempt to keep blood alcohol content below .05 percent.

The .05 percent is a key figure. Staying below the .05 BAC eliminates the risk of a DUI, which most states have set at .08 percent. Also, research indicates a person is at less risk, and makes better decisions when the BAC is below .05 percent. Risk factors include: driving under the influence, riding with a drunk driver, arguing or fighting with a significant other, physical fighting, thinking about suicide, unprotected sex, unwanted or forced sex, late for or missed work, or using illegal drugs.

Some people banter the one-size-fits-all numbers. A 90-pound-woman



versus a 200-pound-guy would arguably make a case. One could take into account food, physical health, genetics, propensity for making bad decisions, the wind direction and moon phase as variable factors ... but the numbers are a norm, rather than having 18 factors that nobody can determine without a calculator and a pocket chart.

The medical portion works with pre-screening, interviewing and treatment before incidents occur; hypothesizing if people at risk are identified and given education or intervention, then there will be fewer episodes later in their life and career.

The Responsible Drinking plan started off with a focus day, educational briefings and the creation of unit champions.

Unit champions are the unit's grass-roots level people who carry the message to the individuals and are in the best position to be advocates on behalf of the servicemembers.

The program has shown astounding results, and with the ongoing support of medical professionals, unit champions and command leadership, the program will continue to have a positive impact on our military members, their families, and their careers.

